



Accessibility Advisory Committee

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METROACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES: July 20, 2015

In attendance: Mr. Paul Semelfort (Chair), Ms. Denise Rush (Co-Chair), Ms. Darnise Bush, Mr. Edward McEntee, Mr. Charles Crawford, Ms. Marisa Laio, and Dr. William Staderman, Dr. Tappan Banerjee, and Mr. Patrick Sheehan, Mr. Brian Miller, Mr. Elver Ariza-Silva, and Dr. Philip Posner.

Call to Order

Chair Semelfort called the MetroAccess Subcommittee (MAS) meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Review of July 2015 Agenda

The agenda was amended removing the Customer Care item and adding a discussion regarding AAC elections. Agenda approved with amendments.

Review of June 2015 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Semelfort stated he made comments regarding The Bus and the impact on the service area, which were not included in the minutes. He asked that the comments be added to the minutes. The minutes were approved pending the addition of comments stated above.

Customer Service and Outreach Report

Ms. Jennifer Weber, Compliance Auditor, MTM, reported that all public comments from the previous meetings have been addressed.

Dr. Banerjee commended the staff on the thorough investigation and completion of the public comments in the Complaint Resolution Report. He asked that the report be made available to the public. Ms. Allison Anderson, Operations Control Center Manager, MetroAccess, informed Dr. Banerjee that the complete report is available on the MetroAccess Subcommittee webpage along with the audio version of the meeting. Mr. June also commented that MetroAccess is expanding the frequently asked questions (FAQ) portion of the webpage to take the repetitive comments and integrate those into the FAQ section.

Ms. Anderson, reported that there were no outreach events to report for the month.

MetroAccess Employee Recognition

Ms. Celisse Outlaw, Service Monitor, MetroAccess, recognized Mr. Isaac Davis as the Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award winner. A detailed description of Mr. Davis' accomplishments can be found in the accompanying document titled "Michael Wilson Staff Recognition Award" located under the July 2015 heading at

http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm

MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability Study

Mr. Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Access Services, gave an overview of the purpose of the MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability study and the progress that has occurred. The study was an assignment given by Metro's Board as a result of the continued increase in ridership on MetroAccess, and the concern about the ultimate costs facing the agency due to the increase. George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis (GMU) was selected as the research partner for this study.

GMU researched the number of people who will possibly ride MetroAccess in the future and the financial impact to Metro of the forecasted trips. GMU observed national trends and demographics in the Washington Metropolitan Area. MetroAccess is currently transporting more than two million passengers per year. GMU's ten-year forecast estimated a range between 2.6 million annually on the low end, 3.1 million in the median, and 3.7 million on the high end. Mr. Kent stated that adding another one million passengers per year would increase MetroAccess cost by \$50 million dollars per year, and that such an increase would not be sustainable.

Mr. Kent went on to explain that some people often use the cost of paratransit per passenger as an efficiency measure by comparing the dollars spent transporting passengers utilizing paratransit to the dollars spent to transport far more individuals on bus and rail. He added that such comparisons are unfair because individuals utilizing paratransit services have conditions that are not voluntary. Individuals with disabilities deserve to have a quality of life, which is why the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates paratransit service be provided.

The study found that continuing to urge customers who are able to travel by bus and rail is key in the efforts to ensure the sustainability of MetroAccess. In the past five years, over a million trips taken each year on bus and rail have been by people who are eligible for MetroAccess. This trend not only needs to continue, but increase moving forward. The study found that numbers for the people who are conditionally eligible versus those who are utilizing the free ride program are inconsistent. There is much more potential for use of bus and rail service based on the findings of conditional eligibility.

Other specific recommendations in the study include: continuation of the ADA definition of the MetroAccess service area and fare policy; expansion of travel training; and encouragement of the jurisdictions to (a) provide more paratransit service directly, (b) provide more fixed route bus service, and (c) continue or develop pilot programs like the DC Taxi program. Mr. Kent stressed that the recommendations presented from the study are subject to Board review. He added that the Board will want to hear from the committee as well as the general public.

Mr. Kent stated that the study will be shared with Committee members to review and determine what aspects need to be discussed. He added that the study will be made available for the general public in a couple of weeks. It will be posted on GMU's website.

Questions/Comments:

Mr. Sheehan asked if there is any idea if the recommendations or how many of the recommendations will be needed to make a zero budget or growth increase over the years.

Mr. Kent stated that if the current direction is maintained, the study suggests that 3.1 million annual MetroAccess trips will be the result.

Dr. Posner said riders asked what would be the motivator for Metro to discontinue bus service in a particular place because the local authority would provide it.

Dr. Banerjee expressed his concern with the increase in the disability population, and the increase and need for MetroAccess service in the future.

Mr. Ariza-Silva discussed the differences in the quality of service that other providers offer. He stated that some of the providers will perform well for a few months, but will not maintain a quality level of service ongoing.

He also asked about the composition of the study group and how many members represented the disability community.

Mr. Kent said the study was not a survey gathering information from the community. It was financial and statistical research.

Ms. Rush suggested having the providers weigh in on the Sustainability Study.

Ms. Bellamy commented on the loss of bus routes, which prevent customers from traveling. She also asked how many new buses were added to the fleet this year. She commented that there are people utilizing MetroAccess who should not due to the need for assistance and support of medical personnel.

Ms. Bush stated that safety issues should be reviewed regarding PCA's.

New Business

Dr. Posner discussed the upcoming election of the MetroAccess Subcommittee Chair, 1st Vice-Chair, and 2nd Vice-Chair. He also commented that there is a need for members to run the working groups.

Ms. Bellamy suggested mentoring other members who become a member of the Committees.

Dr. Moore-Gwynn reminded the Committee that there would not be a MAS meeting in August 2015. She announced that there would be a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ADA and she was distributing flyers for date and times of the celebration.

Public Comments

Comments received were with regard to: How GMU was chosen to analyze the data from the Long-Term Sustainability Study; the need for copies of the Long-Term Sustainability Study to be distributed to the public; why data regarding the Maryland Pilot Program has not been made available to the public; issues with MetroAccess drivers arriving at the incorrect entrances; concern about MetroAccess reducing usage for customers; grandfathering and conditionally eligible; door-to-door or curb-to-curb; excessive on board time for dialysis customers; dispatcher rudeness; contractor being paid by the mileage, trip insertions; changes on weekends; issues with WMR staff; No-Show; and trip movement.

For detailed descriptions and resolutions of public comments made during the meeting, please refer to the July 2015 Complaint Resolution Report located at http://www.wmata.com/accessibility/advocacy_policy/subcommittee.cfm.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.